

Cranberry-Orange Cake With Orange Buttercream

This tender, citrusy cake is the ultimate ending to any holiday meal.

By **Pam Lolley** | Updated on December 12, 2023

Active Time: 35 mins

Total Time: 2 hrs

Servings: 12

Ingredients

Cranberry-Orange Cake:

- 1 cup (8 oz.) salted butter, softened, plus more for pans
- Cooking spray
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 3 cups (about 12 3/4 oz.), plus 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour, divided, plus more for pans
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. table salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 1/4 cups whole buttermilk
- 1 Tbsp. grated orange zest, plus 1/4 cup fresh juice (from 1 large navel orange), divided
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups fresh or thawed frozen cranberries

Orange Buttercream:

- 1 cup (8 oz.) salted butter, softened
- 2 tsp. grated orange zest, plus 1/4 cup fresh juice (from 1 large navel orange), divided
- 1/4 tsp. table salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 5 to 6 Tbsp. heavy whipping cream
- 1 (32-oz.) pkg. powdered sugar

Garnishes:

Fresh orange slices

Sugared cranberries

Directions

Step 1

Prepare the Orange-Cranberry Cake:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease (with butter) and flour 3 (9-inch) round cake pans; line bottom of each pan with parchment paper and lightly grease parchment paper with cooking spray.

Step 2

Beat butter with a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment on medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. Gradually add sugar, beating on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition.

Step 3

Place 3 cups of the flour in a medium bowl. Whisk in baking powder, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda until combined. Whisk together buttermilk and orange juice in a glass measuring cup. With mixer running on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat in orange zest and vanilla until just combined.

Step 4

Toss together cranberries and remaining 1 tablespoon flour in a small bowl. Gently fold cranberries into batter. Divide batter evenly among prepared pans, and, using a small offset spatula, spread in even layer. Bake in preheated oven until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 22 to 26 minutes. Cool in pans on wire racks 10 minutes; remove from pans, and discard parchment paper. Cool completely on wire racks, about 1 hour.

Step 5

Prepare the Orange Buttercream:

Beat butter, orange zest, and salt with a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment on medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk together vanilla, orange juice, and 5 tablespoons of the heavy cream in a small glass measuring cup. With mixer running on low speed, gradually add powdered sugar alternately with cream mixture, beating well after each addition. Increase speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, about 30 seconds to 1 minute. If needed, add up to 1 tablespoon cream, 1 teaspoon at a time, and beat until desired consistency is reached.

Step 6

Assemble the cake:

Place 1 cooled cake layer on a cake stand. Top with 1 cup of the buttercream; spread to edges. Repeat with second cake layer and 1 cup of the buttercream. Top with third cake layer. Frost top and sides of cake with remaining 2 cups buttercream, using a small offset spatula. Garnish with fresh orange slices and sugared cranberries.

Frequently Asked Questions

What other types of frosting pair well with cranberry-orange cake?

If you'd like to tame the citrus in this cake, swap the orange buttercream with our classic vanilla buttercream, or add even deeper flavor with browned butter frosting, buttermilk-cream cheese frosting, or white chocolate-cream cheese frosting.

Can I add nuts to cranberry-orange cake?

If you'd like to add a nutty crunch, feel free to fold chopped toasted pecans or walnuts into the batter before baking, or use as a garnish after decorating.

How do I evenly frost a layer cake?

Take the time to measure 1 cup of buttercream for each layer to ensure that both layers of filling are even. When frosting, work the buttercream evenly over and around the sides of the cake, turning the cake as you go and checking the thickness with a small knife if needed along the way to keep it all even.

Additional reporting by Katie Rosenhouse

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